



State of Wisconsin

Department of Workforce Development

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**Secretary Gassman Awards Injury Prevention Grant to
Aspirus Hospital in Wausau**
Governor Doyle's *Safe Lifting Initiative* will help health care workers avoid back injuries

Wausau – Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Roberta Gassman today announced a \$20,000 grant for Aspirus Hospital in Wausau as part of Governor Jim Doyle's *Safe Lift Initiative* to help nurses and other health care workers avoid injuries when moving patients.

"The hospital performs a valuable service in meeting health care needs of north central Wisconsin residents," Secretary Gassman said. "This grant will help health care employees continue this essential care by preventing injuries on the job. The back injuries nurses may suffer when moving patients can end careers and undermine patient care."

According to the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics, six of the top ten occupations at highest risk for back injuries are in health care. Depending on the severity, such injuries can sideline workers temporarily or end their careers entirely, increasing the cost of worker's compensation and health care overall. The risk of injuries can also discourage others from nursing or other health care careers.

Governor Doyle developed the *Safe Lifting Initiative* as part of Grow Wisconsin, his comprehensive plan for economic and workforce development. A total of \$325,000 in federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA) money is funding the demonstration projects.

The demonstration projects were selected with guidance from the Select Committee on Health Care Workforce Development. The committee's mission is to identify and help implement top-priority, immediate and long-term strategies for addressing health care worker shortages in Wisconsin.

Aspirus Hospital will use the funding to train 1,018 employees on proper use of safe lifting equipment. The project will be done in collaboration with the Northcentral Workforce Development Board.